

Acne and Rosacea Society of Canada – offering hope and help

Acne and rosacea are common skin conditions affecting about 8 million Canadians altogether.

Surprisingly, until fairly recently, there was no organization in Canada focused solely on raising awareness about acne and rosacea to help the many Canadians struggling with these conditions.

That changed in September of 2014 with the launch of the Acne and Rosacea Society of Canada (ARSC), a national, not for profit group dedicated to educating about acne and rosacea by providing independent, reputable and current information on both conditions.

Concerned about the impact of acne and rosacea

Comprised of dermatologists, educators, communicators and patients from across the country, society members came together because of a deep concern about the impact of acne and rosacea on Canadians – both physical and emotional.

“Since acne and rosacea appear on the face in most people and affect appearance and self-esteem, there can be significant emotional distress in addition to the visible signs,” ARSC president and Vancouver dermatologist, Dr. Jason Rivers says. “As well, acne can leave lifelong scars.”

“Despite being common conditions, in the past it was hard for Canadians to find accurate, in-depth information on acne and rosacea. To date, we have developed a lot of helpful, evidence-based information on both conditions - including some good news,” Dr. Rivers adds.

Good news to spread

People are often unaware that both acne and rosacea can be successfully brought under control in most cases. Current medical treatments and new options coming in the next few years are leading to improved results.

And it turns out that treatment does more than help reduce the physical symptoms.

“As their skin gets better, people *feel* better. And that speaks to our mission of trying to improve the lives of those with acne and rosacea,” says Dr. Rivers.

Self-help measures can help too

In addition to medical treatments, self-help measures such as good skin care, can play an important role in helping with acne and rosacea and that’s a message the society is keen to get out.

“If you look at rosacea, avoiding your personal triggers such as spicy food or alcohol can help limit outbreaks. For acne, things like not over-washing the skin and using a moisturizer can lessen skin redness and irritation. There’s a lot people can do themselves to help and we let them know how through our information,” he explains.

Many challenges in raising awareness

Acne and rosacea present different challenges when it comes to educating the public.

“For acne, we’re fighting a lot of myths and misconceptions such as ‘*you just have to get through it*’ or ‘*there’s nothing that can be done about it*,’” says Dr. Rivers.

“Some of the misinformation out there involves things like acne is caused by dirt and is somehow hygiene-related. This is not true of course.”

With rosacea, the society has to address a general lack of knowledge about the condition. Many of those diagnosed did not know they had it.

Society’s websites are education hubs

The society’s main method of educating is via its two websites. For acne, there is a 50-page, bilingual site, www.AcneAction.ca. Most popular pages include Types of Acne, Adult Acne, Treatments and Skin Care. For those wondering about when to see a doctor about acne, an 8-question checklist will quickly provide an answer. The often-debated topic of acne and diet is another area of interest on the site.

Focus on emotional impact of acne

There is a complete section devoted to the emotional impact of acne. It shows how the condition can result in significant emotional distress ranging from bad moods and embarrassment to anxiety and depression.

Rosacea site a comprehensive resource

The society’s www.Rosaceahelp.ca bilingual site kicks off with the basics such as What is rosacea, Signs of rosacea and Types. Other most visited pages include Rosacea Causes, as well as Skin Care and Treatments.

The psychosocial impact of rosacea is also explored, supported by scientific statistics such as: *75% of rosacea patients report low self-esteem and rosacea sufferers have a 5 times greater risk for depression.*

Putting awareness on the calendar

The society designates acne and rosacea awareness months on Health Canada’s Calendar of Health Awareness Events as another way to bring attention to the conditions. April is Rosacea Awareness Month – the same month as in the United States – while September is Acne Awareness Month.

Present role; Vision for the future

“At present, our role is to provide independent reputable information to Canadians and raise awareness. We believe knowledge and understanding will lead to action and improvement, ultimately improving the lives of those with acne and rosacea”, says Dr. Rivers.

And there’s hope these efforts will lead to a better future for those with these conditions.

“We’re hoping for future where, through awareness, education and treatment, the negative psychological and physical impacts of acne and rosacea will be reduced,” he adds.

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For more information, please visit the Acne and Rosacea Society of Canada’s bilingual websites www.AcneAction.ca and www.RosaceaHelp.ca